

U.S. Rep. Jo Ann Emerson (MO-08) said that a Chairman's amendment to the House Energy and Water Appropriations Act of 2012 included an additional \$1 billion for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to repair levees throughout the United States, with \$589.5 million set aside at her request for the Mississippi River and Tributaries system. That system includes the Birds Point levee and Mississippi River levees which border the Eighth Congressional District.

The amendment was agreed to in the House Appropriations Committee and added to legislation which should be considered by the full U.S. House of Representatives this month.

"Our levees have suffered extensive damage. At Birds Point and in the New Madrid Floodway, the need for repairs and reconstruction is acute and immediate. These funds are an investment in the safety of our families, homes, businesses and communities," Emerson said.

If approved by the House and Senate and signed by the president, the funding would be available on October 1, 2011, the first day of the 2012 fiscal year. Emerson is working on a parallel track to get funding for repairs included in a potential funding measure for the current fiscal year.

"At this point, any funds we can secure gives the Corps fewer and fewer reasons to delay the site studies, repair and construction of Mississippi River levees in several states. The entire system has been damaged, but some places need more immediate attention than others," Emerson said.

Along with levees at Cairo, Illinois; Yazoo, Mississippi; and other sites where flood damage has been the worst in the lower Mississippi River basin, Emerson said the replacement of the levee at Birds Point must be a priority for the Corps of Engineers.

"Until just last week, thousands of cubic feet of the Mississippi River were flowing through the Birds Point levee every second. Some fields are buried under several feet of sand. Farmers are assuming a serious risk by putting in a crop with no flood protection, but they have to try – the alternative is to try to absorb the shock of total losses on their crops for the year.

"This funding language, even though it is in the early stages of the appropriations process, shows just how committed we are to helping thousands of people up and down the river rebuild their lives and livelihoods," Emerson said.